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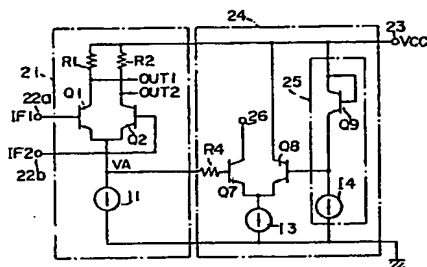
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(54) Level detector for use with a differential amplifier circuit.

(57) Disclosed is a level detector in a differential amplifier circuit (21) in an amplitude-limiting amplifying system for angle-modulation signal amplification. The differential amplifier circuit (21) is made up of differentially paired transistors (Q1, Q2). The level detector (24) contains first and second transistors (Q7, Q8) which form a differential pair. In the first transistor (Q7), the base is connected to an interjunction of the emitters of the differentially paired transistors (Q1, Q2). A second transistor (Q8) is connected at the emitter to the emitter of the first transistor (Q7). A current source (I3) is connected to the emitter interjunction of the first and second transistors (Q7, Q8). A bias circuit (25) applies a predetermined bias potential to the base of the second transistor (Q8). An output signal containing the detected level information of the input signal is derived from the collector of the first or second transistor (Q7, Q8).



EP 0 126 427 A2

- 1 -

Level detector for use with a differential amplifier circuit

The present invention relates to a level detector in a differential amplifier circuit in an amplitude-limiting amplifying system for angle-modulation signal amplification and, more particularly, to a level detector fabricated by an integrated circuit technology.

In an amplitude-limiting amplifying system for treating angle-modulation signals in FM or TV receivers, for example, it is common practice that a DC signal level derived from an IF stage is detected by a level detector and used for driving a level meter or a tuning indicator.

One of the level detectors of this type is disclosed in Kokoku No. 57/18721. In this Gazette, part of the output signal of an amplitude-limiting amplifying circuit is led to a rectifier circuit by a capacitive coupling.

Fig. 1 shows a circuit diagram of a conventional level detector. An amplitude-limiting amplifying circuit 1 is comprised of a pair of NPN transistors Q1 and Q2 forming a differential pair, resistors R1 and R2, and a constant current source I1. The differentially paired NPN transistors Q1 and Q2 are connected together at the emitters and respectively coupled at the bases to differential input signals IF1 and IF2. The resistors R1 and R2 are respectively connected at first

ends to the collectors of the transistors Q1 and Q2 and  
at the second ends connected together to a power source  
terminal 2a for a power voltage Vcc. The constant  
current source I1 is connected between a node of the  
5 emitters of the transistors Q1 and Q2 and ground.  
Output signals OUT1 and OUT2 are derived from nodes  
placed respectively between the collectors of the  
differential transistor pair Q1 and Q2 and the resistors  
R1 and R2. One of the output signals is led to an IF  
10 stage or an audio detector stage, while the other to  
a rectifier circuit 5, through an emitter follower  
circuit 3 including an NPN transistor Q3 and a resistor  
R3, and a coupling capacitor 4. The rectifier circuit  
5 is comprised of NPN transistors Q4 - Q6, a constant  
15 current source I2, bias diodes D1 - D3, and a smoothing  
capacitor 7. The NPN transistor Q4 is connected  
at the collector to the power source terminal 2a applied  
with a power voltage Vcc and at the emitter to one of  
the electrodes of the coupling capacitor 4. The  
20 constant current source I2 is connected between the  
base of the transistor Q4 and the power source terminal  
2b. The bias diodes D1 - D3 are connected in series  
between the base of the transistor Q4 and ground. The  
NPN transistor Q5 is connected at the collector to the  
25 power source terminal 2b and at the base to the emitter  
of the transistor Q4. The NPN transistor Q6 is con-  
nected at the base to the emitter of the transistor Q5,  
at the collector to an output terminal 6, and at the  
emitter to ground. The smoothing capacitor 7 is con-  
30 nected between the base and the emitter of the tran-  
sistor Q6.

The coupling capacitor 4 is negatively charged  
during the periods of negative half cycles of the  
input signals IF1 and IF2. During the periods of the  
35 positive half cycles of the input signals, the input  
signal passed through the coupling capacitor 4 forwardly  
biases the base of the transistor Q5 at a predetermined

voltage. Then, the transistor Q5 is turned on to cause a voltage to appear across the smoothing capacitor 7. The voltage generated turns on the transistor Q6 to produce a DC current at an output terminal 6 coupled with the collector of the transistor Q6.

As described above, the two capacitors 4 and 7 are used in the conventional level detector comprised of the emitter follower circuit 3, the coupling capacitor 4, and the rectifier circuit 5. Therefore, when fabricated into an integrated circuit, it necessarily occupies a larger area on the chip. Particularly, when the frequency of each input signal IF1 and IF2 is low, for example, 455 KHz, it is necessary to use a relatively large capacitor for the coupling capacitor 4. As a result, a necessary chip occupying area for the detector is increased. In the case of 455 KHz, a pattern area necessary for the coupling capacitor 4 is approximately 100 times that of each of the transistors Q1 - Q6. Further, the use of the capacitors 4 and 7 makes a rectifying efficiency very sensitive to the frequency of the input signal. The DC output of the level detector when it is applied to the 455 KHz IF stage is different from that when it is applied for the 10.7 MHz IF stage. For coupling the level detector with a level meter, it is necessary to adjust the DC level before it is applied to the level meter. Further, the capacitors 4 and 7 tend to vary in capacitance value in the manufacturing stage. This inevitably varies a rectifying efficiency, resulting in an indefinite reading of the meter.

Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to solve the problems associated with the use of the coupling and smoothing capacitors in a level detector. It is a feature of the present invention to solve the problems by not using those capacitors. An advantage to be derived is a level detector requiring less chip

area. Another advantage is a level detector capable of detecting, with substantially constant efficiency, an amplitude of an input signal to an amplitude-limiting amplifier circuit over a wide frequency range.

5       According to the present invention, there is provided a level detector in use with a differential amplifier circuit in an amplitude-limiting amplifying system for angle-modulation signal amplification. The differential amplifier circuit contains transistors  
10       commonly emitter-connected to form a differential pair. The level detector also includes differentially paired transistors of which the emitters are connected together to a constant current source. One of the paired transistors is DC coupled at the base to the emitter  
15       node of the differentially coupled transistors in the differential amplifier. The other is coupled at the base with a predetermined bias potential as applied from a bias circuit. An output signal of the level detector is derived from the collector of the first transistor,  
20       depending on a base input potential.

      With such an arrangement, an output signal of the level detector depends on a voltage appearing at the emitter node in the differential amplifier circuit and generated by half-wave rectifying both input signals to  
25       the amplifier circuit and combining these rectified signals. The voltage takes a substantially DC form when the differential amplifier is saturated. This indicates that the level detector output at this time can be treated as a DC signal.

30       This invention can be more fully understood from the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

      Fig. 1 is a circuit diagram of a conventional level detector for an amplitude-limiting amplifying  
35       circuit;

      Fig. 2 is a circuit diagram of a first embodiment of a level detector according to present invention;

Fig. 3 shows voltage waveforms useful in explaining the operation of the level detector of Fig. 2; and

5 Figs. 4 and 5 are circuit diagrams of other embodiments of a level detector according to the present invention.

Reference is made to Fig. 1 illustrating an embodiment of a level detector according to the present invention, which is coupled with one of the IF multiple  
10 stages in an FM receiver, for example. A differential amplifying circuit 21, or an amplitude-limiting amplifying circuit, is provided for amplifying input signals (IF signals) IF1 and IF2 supplied from the preceding IF stage, and supplies the amplified one  
15 to the succeeding IF stage or an audio detector stage (not shown). Input terminals 22a and 22b, supplied with the input signals IF1 and IF2, are respectively coupled with the bases of differentially paired transistors Q1 and Q2. A connection point of the  
20 emitters of the transistors Q1 and Q2 is connected to one end of a constant current source I1 which is further connected at the other end to ground. The collectors of the transistors Q1 and Q2 are connected respectively through load resistors R1 and R2 to a  
25 power source terminal 23 for a positive power voltage Vcc. Output signals OUT1 and OUT2 of the differential amplifier circuit 21 are respectively derived from a connection point of the load resistor R1 and the transistor Q1 and a connection point of the load resistor R2  
30 and the transistor Q2. These outputs OUT1 and OUT2 are supplied to the succeeding IF stage or an audio detector stage. A potential at the interjunction of the emitters of the transistors Q1 and Q2 is applied to a level detector 24. The level detector 24 is comprised of an  
35 input resistor R4, a pair of transistors Q7 and Q8, a constant current source I3, and a bias circuit 25. The emitter interjunction of the transistors Q1 and Q2 is

connected to the base of the transistor Q7, through the input resistor R4. The collector of the transistor Q7 is coupled with an output terminal 26 for providing a detected signal level (DC level). The emitter of the transistor Q7 is connected to the emitter of the transistor Q8. Inserted between the emitter inter-junction and ground is a constant current source I3. The collector of the transistor Q8 is connected to the power source terminal 23. The base of the transistor Q8 is connected to the emitter of the NPN transistor Q9 of which the collector and the emitter are both connected to the power source terminal 23. A constant current source I4 is connected between the emitter of the transistor Q9 and ground.

The operation of the level detector thus arranged will be given referring to Fig. 3. Input signals IF1 and IF2 are respectively applied to the input terminals 22a and 22b of the differential amplifier circuit 21. Then, a voltage VA appearing at the emitter node of the transistors Q1 and Q2 takes waveforms as shown in Fig. 3. The waveforms are each similar to a full-wave rectified waveform. For the amplitude of the input signals IF1 and IF2, which are above a predetermined value, the differential amplifier circuit 21 operates in a saturated fashion to limit the amplitudes of the input signals. The waveform VA1 in Fig. 3 is obtained when the differential amplifier circuit is not saturated. The waveform VA2 is when the differential amplifier circuit is substantially saturated. Although only two extreme examples of waveforms are illustrated, the amplitude limiting widely changes depending on the amplitude of the input signals, and provides various waveforms with different amplitudes. In the level detector 24, the bias circuit 25 applies a bias voltage to the base of the transistor Q8 so that only the transistor Q8 is driven to allow a current flow therethrough when the amplitudes of the input signals

IF1 and IF2 are zero, that is, no signal is applied to the differential amplifier circuit 21. Accordingly, when the differential amplifier circuit 21 is supplied with no signal, the transistor Q7 is in an OFF state.

5 Then, let us assume that the input signals IF1 and IF2 are applied to the differential amplifier circuit 21, and the voltage VA with a waveform as shown in Fig. 3 is applied to the base of the transistor Q7. In this case, during a period when the base potential of the

10 transistor Q7 is higher than that of the transistor Q8 (as illustrated by slanted lines in Fig. 3), current flows through the transistor Q7, depending on the amplitudes of the input signals IF1 and IF2. When the amplitudes of the input signals are very large, the

15 differential amplifier circuit 21 is greatly saturated and hence the waveform of the voltage VA approximates to the DC waveform. Therefore, the current output from the transistor Q7 is substantially a DC current. The DC current derived from the output terminal 26 connecting

20 to the collector of the transistor Q7 is used for driving a level meter, for example.

The circuit arrangement as mentioned uses no coupling capacitor, and hence requires less chip area in the IC fabrication. In this respect, the circuit

25 arrangement is suitable for IC fabrication. Further, the arrangement is free from a variability of capacitances and is little influenced by a change of the input signal frequency. Therefore, the level detector can exactly detect the level of the input signal to the

30 amplitude-limiting amplifying circuit over a wide frequency range.

Turning now to Fig. 4, there is shown another embodiment of a level detector according to the present invention. As shown, an interjunction of the emitters

35 of the transistors Q1 and Q2 in the amplitude-limiting amplifying circuit 21 is connected through the resistor R4 to the base of the NPN transistor Q7. The emitter



of the transistor Q7 is connected to the emitter of the NPN transistor Q8. Those transistors Q7 and Q8 form a differential pair. The constant current source circuit I3 is inserted between the emitter node of these  
5 transistors Q7 and Q8 and ground. Inserted between the collectors of the transistors Q7 and Q8 and the power source terminal 23 is a current mirror circuit 27 made up of PNP transistors Q10 and Q11. A mirror capacitor 28 is connected between the base and the  
10 collector of the transistor Q7. The base of the transistor Q8 is connected to the emitter of an NPN transistor Q9. The base and the collector of the transistor Q9 are connected together and to the power source terminal 23 through a resistor R5. A constant  
15 current source I4 is connected between the emitter of the transistor Q9 and ground. The interjunction of the transistors Q7 and Q10 is wired to the base of an output transistor Q12 of the PNP type. The emitter of the transistor Q12 is connected to the power source terminal  
20 23, while the collector is connected to the output terminal 26. The resistor R5, the transistor Q9, and the constant current source I4 cooperate to make up a bias circuit 25. The bias circuit 25 biases, through the emitter of the transistor Q9, the transistor Q8  
25 so that when no signal is input to the transistor Q7, a base potential VB8 of the transistor Q8 is higher than a base potential VB7 of the transistor Q7.

With such an arrangement, at the time of no signal, the following relation holds:

30 
$$i_8 = i_{11} = i_{10} > i_7$$

where  $i_7$ ,  $i_8$ ,  $i_{10}$ , and  $i_{11}$  are respectively the currents through the collectors of the transistors Q7 and Q8, and the currents flowing through the emitters  
35 of the transistors Q10 and Q11. This relation indicates that when no signal is applied to the transistor Q7, no current flows into the output transistor Q12 for

level detection. When the input signals IF1 and IF2 are applied to the amplitude-limiting amplifying circuit 21, the base potential VB7 of the transistor Q7 is larger than the base potential VB8 of the transistor Q8, and  $i7 > i8$ . Then, current flows into the level detecting transistor Q12. In this case, if a ripple component is contained in the input signals IF1 and IF2, it is smoothed by the input resistor R4 and the mirror capacitor 28 of the transistor Q7, so that a smoothed level detected output is produced. When the frequencies of the input signals IF1 and IF2 are low, the mirror capacitor must be formed separately from the transistor Q7.

While in the above-mentioned embodiments, the level detector according to the present invention is applied to one of the IF multiple stages, a plurality of level detectors may be provided respectively associated with a plurality of IF stages. In this case, the output terminals of the level detectors are interconnected. This alternative arrangement is capable of effecting a level detection over a large variety of amplitudes of the input signal. This idea may be implemented as shown in Fig. 5. The circuit arrangement of Fig. 5 employs only two level detectors for the two IF stages, for simplicity. As shown, the outputs of a first-stage differential amplifier circuit 21, or amplitude-limiting amplifying circuit, are coupled with the bases of differentially paired NPN transistors Q13 and Q14 forming a second stage differential amplifier circuit 29. The emitters of the transistors Q13 and Q14 are connected together. A constant current source I5 is inserted between the emitter interjunction and ground. The collectors of the transistors Q13 and Q14 are respectively connected to load resistors R6 and R7 which are then connected together and to the power source terminal 30 for the power voltage Vcc. The leads, respectively connecting

to the nodes between the resistor R6 and the transistor Q13 and between the resistor R7 and the transistor Q14, are coupled with the succeeding differential amplifier circuit 21 or an audio detector. The base of an NPN  
5 transistor Q15 is connected through an input resistor R8 to a connection point between the emitter node of the transistors Q13 and Q14 and the constant current source circuit I5. The emitters of the transistors Q15 and Q16 are interconnected to provide an interjunction. The  
10 interjunction is further connected to ground, through a constant current circuit I6. The collector of the transistor Q15 is connected to the output terminal 26. The transistor Q16 is connected at the collector to the power source terminal 30 and at the base to the bias  
15 circuit 25.

As described above, each stage of the level detector circuits operates in the same manner as the Fig. 2 circuit. Further, since the output terminals of the level detectors are interconnected, the level  
20 detection is possible over a variety of amplitudes of the input signals.

Claims:

1. A level detector in a differential amplifier circuit (21) having differentially paired transistors (Q1, Q2), which is contained in an amplitude-limiting amplifying system for angle-modulation amplification, said level detector characterized by: a power source terminal (23); an output terminal (26) for power voltage (Vcc); a first transistor (Q7) having a collector connected to said output terminal (26), a base connected to said differential amplifier circuit (21) and an emitter; a second transistor (Q8) having an emitter connected to the emitter of said first transistor (Q7), a collector connected to said power source terminal (23) and a base, said first and second transistors (Q7, Q8) forming a differential pair; a current source circuit (I3) inserted between an interjunction of the emitters of said first and second transistors (Q7, Q8); and a bias circuit (25) for applying a predetermined bias voltage to the base of said second transistor (Q8).
2. A level detector according to claim 1, characterized in that said differential amplifier circuit (21) comprises: input terminals (22a, 22b) for receiving differential input signals (IF1, IF2); first and second resistors (R1, R2); differentially paired transistors (Q1, Q2) having bases respectively connected to said input terminals (22a, 22b); collectors connected respectively through said first and second load resistors (R1, R2) to said power source terminal (23) connected to each other emitters; and a current source circuit (I1) inserted between an interjunction of the emitters of said paired transistors (Q1, Q2) and ground, and in which the emitter interjunction of said paired transistors (Q1, Q2) is connected to the base of said first transistor (Q7).

3. A level detector according to claim 1, characterized in that said bias circuit (25) includes a transistor (Q9) having a base, a collector connected to said base, and an emitter; a current source circuit (I4) is inserted between the emitter of said transistor (Q9) and ground.

4. A level detector according to claim 1, characterized by further comprising a current mirror circuit (27) provided between the collectors of said first and second transistors (Q7, Q8) and said power source terminal (23), and a transistor (Q12) having a base connected to the collector of said first or second transistor (Q7, Q8) an emitter connected to said power source terminal (23) and a collector connected to an output terminal (26).

5. A level detector according to claim 1, characterized in that a plurality of said level detectors are connected in a cascade fashion.

FIG. 1

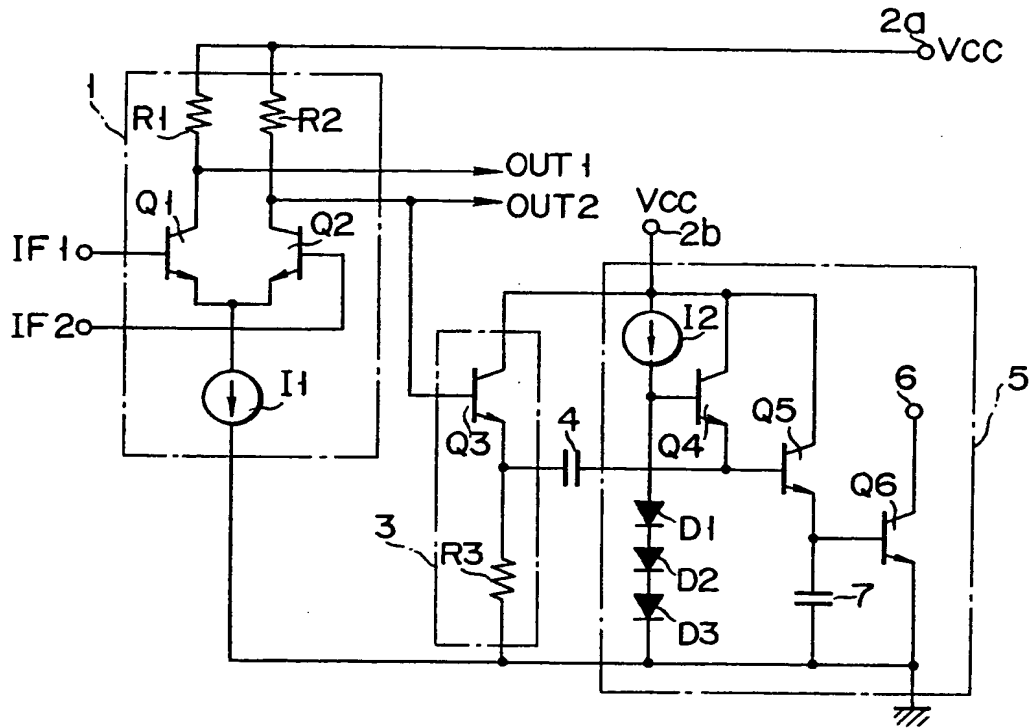


FIG. 2

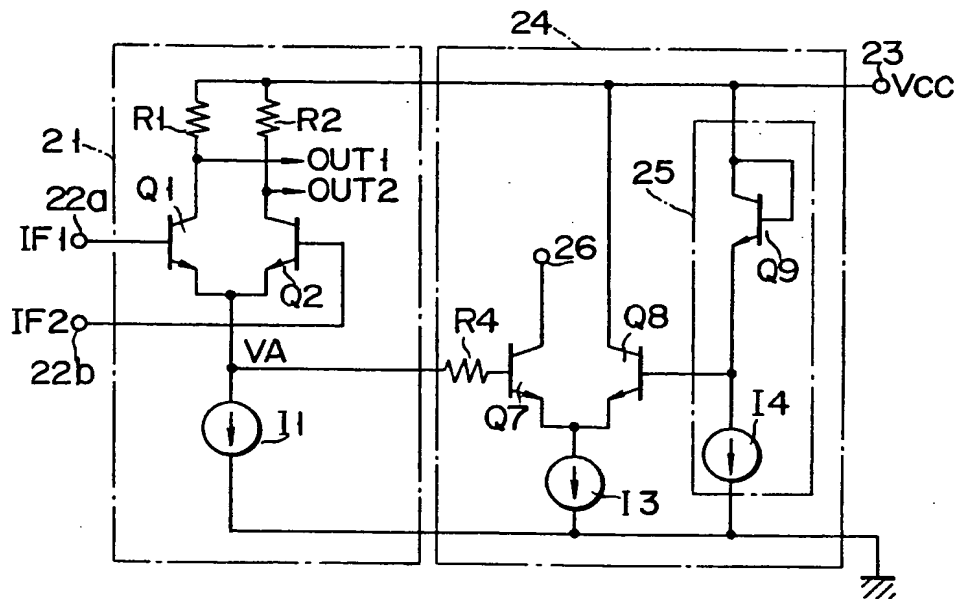


FIG. 3

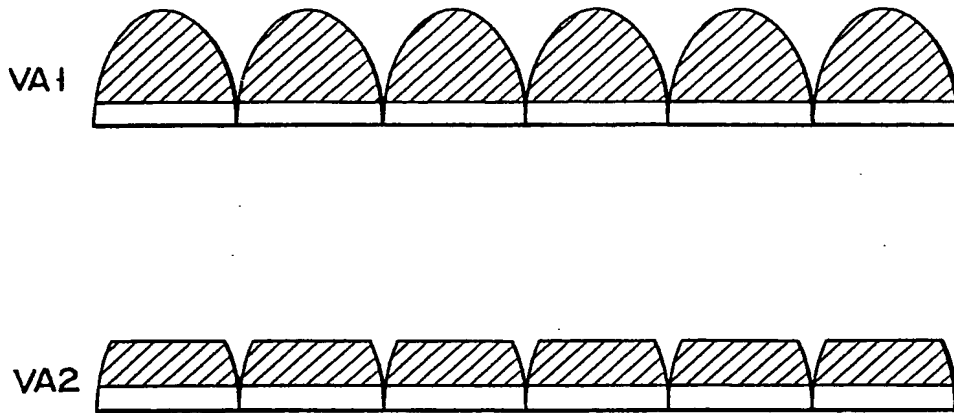


FIG. 4

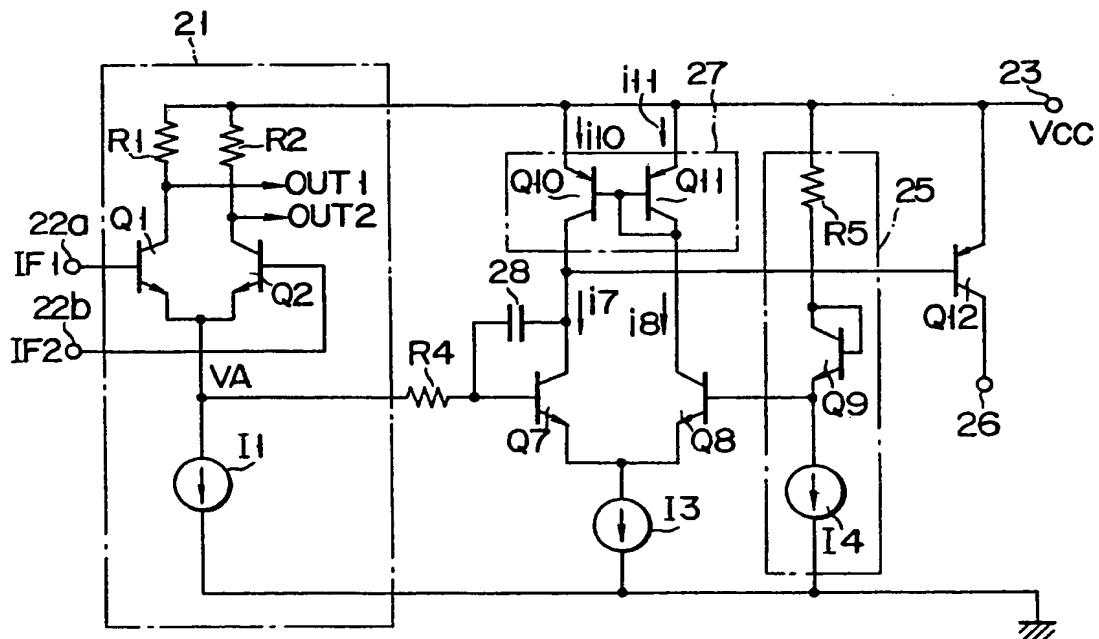


FIG. 5

